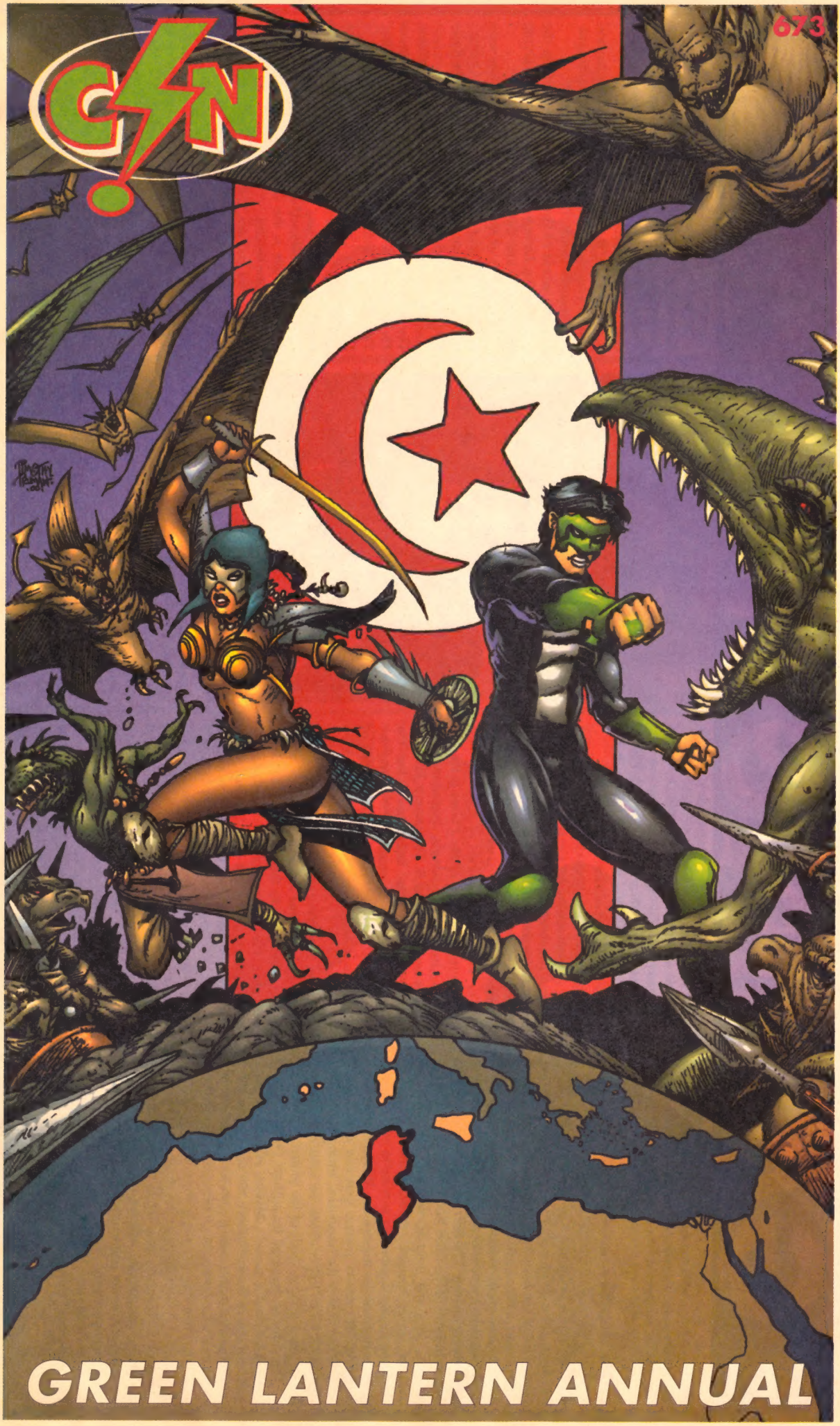
673
GREEN LANTERN ANNUAL

ENTER, PLANETARY HEROES

The DC Universe is a pretty big place—but for the most part, readers don't see a great deal of superhero action set anywhere outside of the DCU's United States. In fact, there are probably more extraterrestrial heroes than there are international heroes currently—but DC is taking action to remedy that beginning in early June with the debut of the first of eight Planet DC Annuals.

No, it's not a theme restaurant (that's Planet Krypton, remember)—it's a theme that adds an international flavor to the DC Universe by introducing never-before-seen heroes who operate outside of the United States.

Planet DC kicks off on June 14th with the release of ***JLA Annual #4***, written by *Brian K. Vaughan* and illustrated by *Steve Scott* and *Hector Collazo*. This extra-length adventure takes the JLA to Turkey to confront an ancient evil—but they discover that there's some pretty powerful local talent on hand in the person of the mystic-powered heroine known as the Janissary.

June 21st brings ***Batgirl Annual #1***, written by *Scott Peterson* and illustrated by *Mike Deodato* and *John Stanisci*. Batman guest-stars in an adventure that takes the hooded heroes to India as they investigate the kidnapping of an Indian actor from the streets of Gotham. There, they join forces with the shapeshifting Indian heroine Aruna, who is already on the trail of the kidnappers.

Superman Annual #12, a June 28th release, introduces three Mexican super-heroes—Acrata, El Muerto, and Iman—in a tale written by ***Crimson*** co-creators *Oscar Pinto* and *Francisco Haghenbeck* (with assistance by *Brian K. Vaughan*) and illustrated by *Carlos Barberi* and *Juan Vlasco*; ***Crimson*** illustrator *Humberto Ramos* supplies the cover art. Once he arrives in Mexico, Superman finds himself involved in a mystical battle that isn't quite what it seems.

On July 5th, fans will meet a new Japanese hero, the Bushido, in ***Titans Annual #1***, written by *Geoff Johns* and *Ben Raab* and illustrated by *Justiniano*, *Rick Mays*, and *Chris Ivy*. Nightwing, Arsenal, Troia, Flash, and Tempest travel to Japan to help Beast Boy and Flamebird confront a supernatural foe... but will Bushido form an even bigger threat?

Why settle for one hero when you can introduce a new international *superteam*? That's *Chuck Dixon* and *Alcatena*'s philosophy behind ***Flash Annual #13***, which introduces a new group of Argentinian heroes. When these international superbeings and their ally Jay Garrick are taken captive by supernatural forces, one of their teammates, Salmanca, uses her mystical powers to summon Flash Wally West to assist them. Look for it on July 12th.

Green Lantern Annual #9, written by *Tim Truman* (who also supplies the cover art) and illustrated by *Coy Turnbull*, *Stephen Blue*, and *John Lowe*, brings Green Lantern face to face with Tunisia's champion, Sala, as she wields her sword alongside Green Lantern and his ring in their battle against the demon Pazuzu. Sala is already slated to appear in an upcoming JLA prestige-format miniseries, making this a must-have for JLA fans who don't want to miss out on the character's origin.

JSA Annual #1, written by *Geoff Johns* and *David Goyer* with art by *Buzz*, *Canton*, *Wade Von Grawbadger*, and *Jim Royal*, introduces Nemesis, a mysterious Greek vigilante with links to Archie Goodwin and Walter Simonson's Manhunter. She joins with the women of the JSA to confront the re-formed, world-threatening Council, now led by one of the JSA's greatest adversaries. Look for it on August 2nd.

Batman Annual #24, written by ***John Ostrander*** and illustrated by the veteran team of *Jim Aparo* and *Sal Buscema* (with a cover by *Michael Wm. Kaluta*), follows on August 9th. Batman ventures to England to find out who or what has attacked Alfred while on holiday, leaving him catatonic. Once he arrives, his investigation brings him face to face with Rosemary Fields and the English metahuman known as the Boggart.

Not only will each of these annuals introduce one or more new international heroes, but each book will feature a backup story revealing the origin of these new characters. Many of these characters will graduate to more active roles in the DC Universe in the future, meaning that these Planet DC Annuals are a great way to meet some of the stars of tomorrow. Don't worry about overlooking these eight books on the stands: each annual will feature a unifying cover design featuring the new heroes and their flags of national origin. Each annual carries a $3.50 pricetag—which is quite a bargain for 48 pages of international adventure!

by CLIFF BIGGERS

JOE SACCO'S NOT PLAYING IT SAFE

Comics and war... the two have gone together ever since the earliest days of the Golden Age. But for the most part, comic books offer a "safe" interpretation of what war is, a heroes-versus-villains tale that boils the struggle down to its most basic black-and-white aspects.

Joe Sacco refuses to follow that sort of safe path, though. In his graphic novel ***Safe Area Gorazde***, a cathartic look at the war in the former Yugoslavia, Sacco presents a view of the war from the inside. The creator spent five months in Bosnie in 1996, seeing the war from the point of view of the fighters, the victims, the bystanders, and the alienated. The result is an amazing tour de force that redefines what a war comic is.

"NATO had just finished a two-week bombing campaign against the Bosnian Serbs," Sacco said, "a cease-fire had been declared, and under the terms of the cease-fire, UN convoys were to be allowed unhindered access to the Gorazde enclave, which was deep in Serb territory. Some journalists I knew had joined these convoys and come back after a day or so. I,d been in Sarajevo for about six weeks, and I sort of went for the hell of it, just because a press pass entitled me to get on a convoy, to see something new. But I fell in love with the place and the people, and I was captivated by their story. I was pulled in."

The result is an intensely personal work that brings the war home in a way that no comic book ever has. "Gorazde was a microcosm of the break-up of Yugoslavia. Serbs and Muslims had lived alongside each other for a long time, nationalist leaders stoked their fears, and the communities went to war. By telling Gorazde,s story and the story of individual people there, it,s possible to show the disintegration of the goodwill that existed between neighbors and the drift toward total war between them."

For Sacco, there were advantages to being a comic book creator and not a wire reporter or a broadcast journalist. "The chief advantage I had in Bosnia was not having to file a story every day, not having to cover the morning press conferences. In other words, I was free to spend a week or two at a time in Gorazde, which most journalists considered a backwater. They,d come in, get their interviews, and go back to Sarajevo to file. I wasn,t under the same constraints. I could hang out, get to know people, let them get to know me, and find out their stories slowly. No one was looking over my shoulder telling me what to do."

Sacco also is proud of the fact that comics can bring this story to the readers in a way that a traditional news story can't. Most news reporters get a few hundred words, a few photos—but Sacco has 240 pages of pictures and words to reveal just how hellish the war is. "Before I got there myself, I read some very evocative journalism about Gorazde, but I was at a loss to picture the town in my mind. I didn't know if it was a little village or what. When I got there, I saw it was a town of multi-story buildings and apartment complexes. Comics can provide a great deal of visual information, which I think makes a place like Gorazde *real* in the reader's eye. And not just the place, but the people, because through background detail one can see what they wore, how they chopped wood, the extent of the damage to their homes, etc. Comics is a very engaging journalistic medium. It allows a sense of time and place to seep in through repeated images. It's a more organic way of creating an atmosphere than photojournalism, which usually tries to use one picture to sum up a whole story."

If there's any one thing that readers come away with after completing Sacco's powerful tale, the creator hopes that it's "a sense of connection with the town of Gorazde. I hope readers will recognize themselves in the people I introduce in Gorazde. I want readers to feel empathy, to appreciate the human stories behind the staggering headlines. I want readers to understand how history can run over people and destroy lives. I want readers to appreciate how lucky they are to live in a place that's known peace for a long long time."

Safe Area Gorazde, a $28.95 hardcover that demonstrates the strength of comics to bring complex contemporary problems to life, is scheduled for May release from Fantagraphics.

by CLIFF BIGGERS

Courtesy of your Friendly Neighborhood Comics Outlet!

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VIP—COMICS' NEWEST DANGER GIRLS!

Looking for sexy, fast-paced, over-the-top action-adventure with a lighthearted edge? Given up on *any* hope for another issue of *Danger Girl* in your lifetime? Well, there *is* an alternative!

In July, TV Comics is releasing the first issue of ***VIP***, the comic book based on the pop-favorite syndicated tv series starring *Pamela Anderson Lee*. In case you've missed the premise, it's pretty simple: Valerie Irons is the pulchritudinous front-woman for a high-tech team of bodyguards; in spite of the fact that she isn't exactly trained for the job, though, she frequently finds herself in action with her three lovely female comrades, along with the male VIP operatives.

In the first issue, Valerie Irons and the VIP team are hired to protect the life of a highly noted scientist and his most recent discovery from falling into the hands of the wrong people, who might use them for international terrorism or global destruction.

VIP #1, the kickoff issue of a three-issue limited series that hopefully marks the first of a long run of VIP books, is written by *C.J. Henderson* and illustrated by *Tom Derenick* and *Tom Grindberg*. And unlike some creators who have let their fame go to their heads, these guys have enough professionalism (and a proven track record) to make sure that the books appear on a regular basis!

CSN

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Editorial Office:
2770 Carillon Crossing
Marietta, GA 30066
fax (770) 973-6949
cliffbig@earthlink.net

Business Office:
4135 LaVista Rd.
Ste. 610-PMB-110
Tucker, GA 30085 (30084 Fedex)
(770) 939-1364
fax (770) 939-8898
wardo@mindspring.com

Publisher
Comic Shop News, Inc.

Visit our WWW site at:
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Editors
Cliff Biggers & Ward Batty

ELLIS'S IMAGE ENHANCEMENT

Warren Ellis's first project for Image, *City of Silence*, has just kicked off its run—but obviously the popular writer is very happy with his publishing partners, because he has already committed to several more Image projects.

"I have just this week sealed an agreement to publish a slate of three-issue serials, original graphic novels, and trade paperbacks with Image Comics," Ellis told ***CSNsider***. "These will be commercial full-colour comics series, with the sort of first-class widescreen production values associated with books like ***Planetary*** and ***The Authority***—if not better. Each serial I do will be its own complete story; no ongoing series, no continuing stories in the form of strings of miniseries. I'm talking about a minimum of four completely new serialised books a year.

"The intent here is not simply to please and entertain the already existing specialty comics store audience. That would not be good enough. There is a point to doing things this way. It has become clear that to do this properly, I need control, I need to be able to do things at my own speed, and I need to do them my own way. Image Comics provides this to me. Image Comics has from its inception been about freedom and choosing your battle. This is mine. Money isn't important. Changing comics is.

"All of these books will be accompanied by plans, built in consultation with [Image publisher] *Jim Valentino*, Image marketing director *Anthony Bozzi* and a circle of retail advisors, to draw in new readers from outside the comics culture. The intent is to drive new readers into the specialty comics stores for this work, in much the same way that ***Transmetropolitan*** has made new comics readers and PLANETARY has gotten top-rank reviews in places like ***Entertainment Weekly***—but bigger."

Ellis has assembled a support team to help him launch this line of books. "***Michael Heisler,*** previously editor-in-chief of Wildstorm, is standing with me as consultant and wizard. 'Wizard' is a useful catch-all term for 'knows everything I don't.' I expect to be able to call upon several other friends who are prominent in the high end of the comics business, including the best artists I know—who, not coincidentally, are also the best artists you know."

Some details are still being kept confidential for the time being. "I'm not ready to announce the launch books yet. This isn't a tease, or an attempt to control the flow of information. We're just not ready yet. Not everything is signed and sealed. When it is, I'll announce it, with as much additional information as I can. I want to be able to do this properly, right from the start."

Image publisher Jim Valentino added that "we consider this a major leap forward in Image's progression toward more reader friendly comics from top seat creators. We are honored that a writer of Warren's stature has chosen to bring his vision to Image."

The as-yet-untitled line of comics, slated to debut in 2001, will feature a mix of three-issue miniseries and original graphic novels. Each project will be designed as a standalone, with no crossover concepts or characters. Ellis explains that, in this manner, he is "doing the sort of material I live for—accessible stories outside the mainstream, as mad and beautiful and smart as I can make them... a slate of work aimed as much at new readers outside comics culture as at the already-extant audience waiting for something new."

JOE QUESADA, FIRST KNIGHT

For the past two years, the Marvel Knights line has been co-directed by *Joe Quesada* and *Jimmy Palmiotti*, long-time friends and collaborators. That's about to change, though, as *Jimmy Palmiotti* doffs the Marvel Knights armor and leaves *Joe Quesada* to helm the line.

"It's with a heavy heart that I come to you all with the announcement of Jimmy,s resignation from Marvel Knights," Quesada told ***CSNsider***. " I'm aware that there has been some public rumblings on the matter, particularly among the creative community, but that is simply because those who worked for and with us have been privy to the knowledge of the situation for some time now. It was out of respect for our wishes and the situation at hand that we asked for discretion in the matter and kept the information amongst ourselves. Since we're beginning to receive e-mail's and phone calls on the subject, we figured better to address it ourselves before the rumormongers turn it into some sort of melodrama that it surely isn't.

"On Thursday, March 2, 2000, Jimmy tendered his resignation due to personal matters at home and the need for time to resolve them in a manner that they justifiably need. This required that he lessen his workload in order to focus on things that were infinitely more important than comicbooks. Along with his no longer being involved with the day-to-day process of working with Marvel Knights, he has had to cut down on some inking chores. Since part of our agreement with *Steve Dillon* was that Jimmy would ink his entire ***Punisher*** run, both he and I decided that it would be best and simpler for me to find someone to take over the inking duties on ***Daredevil***. "As for Jimmy, he is not leaving comics; he's just taking some time for what,s really important. And as for Marvel Knights—it's business as usual! We want to thank Jimmy for all the work and effort he has put into making Marvel Knights a success, and even though he is no longer an editor of the imprint, as an artist and freelancer he still remains a part of the MK family." Palmiotti has remained one of the most active inkers in the comics field even during his Marvel Knights tenure.

HOT LINEUP FOR RING OF FIRE

A few weeks ago, ***CSNsider*** told you about ***Green Lantern: Ring of Fire***, the August fifth-week event that will help to establish Kyle Rayner as the one true Green Lantern. Now we know a little more about the titles and creative teams for this seven-book event.

The line kicks off with ***Green Lantern: Ring of Fire #1***, written by Brian Vaughan and illustrated by Norm Breyfogle and Jess Delperdang. After that, DC will offer five oneshots that team up established DC heroes with all-new Green Lanterns.

Ring of Fire: Green Lantern/Kyle Rayner is produced by *Judd Winick, Randy Green, and Wayne Faucher*. ***Ring of Fire: Green Lantern/Atom*** is written by *Brian Vaughan* and illustrated by *Trevor McCarthy* and *Tyson MacAdoo*. ***Ring of Fire: Green Lantern/Firestorm*** is produced by *Jay Faerber, Ron Randall,* and *Dan Davis*. ***Green Lantern/Power Girl*** unites the creative team of *Scott Beatty, Walter McDaniel, and Rich Perotta*. And ***Ring of Fire: Green Lantern/Adam Strange*** is written by Vaughan and illustrated by *Cary Nord* and *Mark Lipke*.

The series ends with the extra-length bookend volume ***Green Lantern: Ring of Fire #2***, written by Vaughan and illustrated by *Robert Teranishi* and *Claude St. Aubin*. And once it's over, there should be no doubt regarding Kyle Rayner's role in the DC Universe!

BAT-FANS GET MORE FROM LES

Les Daniels, the author responsible for ***Batman: The Complete History*** and ***Superman: The Complete History*** (two must-have volumes for fans of the superhero medium), has joined with Chronicle Books to create an all-new collectible that no Bat-fan will want to be without. ***The Batman Masterpiece Edition Hardcover Boxed Set*** offers a variant version of the ***Batman: Complete History*** volume along with two other goodies: a deluxe facsimile reprint of the first ***Batman*** comic, along with an exclusive ***Golden Age Batman Action Figure*** produced especially for this set. The fully-articulated figure, clad in the original Bat-costume, comes with utility belt, poseable cape, and batarang. Look for the deluxe set in August (but be sure to reserve a copy this month with the friendly folks at your local comic shop, since they have to place orders early for this one!)

CHAOS! HEADS TO CHYNA

... And they're taking *Steven Grant* and *Jill Thompson* along with them!

Chyna #1, the latest WWF comic from Chaos!, unites wrestling-comics veteran *Steven Grant*, who has produced other high-energy WWF-inspired books for the company, with *Jill Thompson*, better known for delightful fantasy work for such diverse works as ***Sandman*** and her own ***Scary Godmother***. "I think Jill surprised us all when she told us she wanted to do a wrestling comic," Grant said. "She's a huge fan of wrestling and Chyna in particular, and working together is going to be a blast. We're both looking to bring the story lots of mayhem and action, as well as lots of Chyna!"

The first issue re-casts Chyna as a bodyguard; this time, she's on a mission to protect a wealthy industrialist's daughter against a death cult led by the enigmatic Kassandra. Once she takes on a mission, Kassandra never gives up—but she's never had to face anyone like Chyna before!

Chyna #1 is slated for August release.

VAMPI SUCCUMBS TO THE ORDER OF LAU

Vampirella's look has been pretty much unaltered for the better part of three decades now, so it was probably time for a change. And what a change it is!

Artist *Kevin Lau* has created a bold new look for Vampi that abandons the seductress-in-a-sleazy-swimsuit look for something much more dynamic. "We were looking to recreate the excitement and charge of the original Vampirella for today's fans," Harris Comics Editorial Director *David Bogart* said. "Once we saw his designs and realized how incredible and fresh his vision is, we just cut him loose and let him do his thing."

The new look is part of a bold new reinterpretation of the character, according to series writer *David Conway*. "Working with Kevin on this has allowed us to realize the ambition of shaping Vampi for the 21st Century. His character designs and his feel for the mood and architecture of the new environment have opened up the entire book to a totally radical reinterpretation. Essentially, what I've wanted to bring to this book is a hard, modern edge—and Kevin has given me the freedom to do just that. It's a synergistic approach to creating this title—a long-term, creative relationship between artist and writer."

"Kevin's vision of Vampi is dark and terrifying, and one that transcends any bad-girl trend," associate publisher *Jonathan Rheingold* added. "He has allowed us to reach out to a wider audience while at the same giving our faithful fans even more to look forward to. Your expectations will be blown away—for good!" Expect to see this new look unveiled this July with the release of ***Vampi #1***.

JC GETS HC

Chris Ware's Jimmy Corrigan, the star of ***Acme Novelty Library***, finally earns his own hardcover this summer, thanks to Ware and publisher Fantagraphics. The massive 380-page hardcover edition collects all the Jimmy Corrigan segments from ***Acme Novelty Library*** ... sort of.

According to Fantagraphics, "This hardcover, 380-page, full-color collection has been

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dramatically revised from the original episodes originally presented in the pages of Ware's multiple Harvey and Eisner Award-winning *Acme Novelty Library* series from Fantagraphics—which was dramatically revised from its original incarnation as a weekly comic strip for Chicago's *New City* newspaper."

The book tells the story of Jimmy Corrigan, the smartest kid on Earth, who, in his thirties, is given the long-delayed opportunity to meet his father for the first time. The book not only transcends time and place with its distinctive storytelling, but it also stretches the comic book framework—and the hardcover will continue that trend with fold-out instructions, an index, paper cut-outs, and brief notes, along with all-new front, back, and inside covers as well. Look for *Jimmy Corrigan* in August.

SPAWNING ARTISTIC EXCITEMENT

Todd McFarlane and the Spawn gang are making a very big thing out of the upcoming *Spawn #100*—and why shouldn't they, since this is the first Image title to reach triple digits? McFarlane will return to supply an original cover for the hundredth issue, and he's not alone—other cover artists include *Ashley Wood*, *Greg Capullo*, *Mike Mignola*, *Frank Miller*, and *Alex Ross*. And this isn't going to be one of those variant-cover-chase-games that is all too common with publishers looking to hike sales at the expense of consumers.

"Each cover with have its own retail code so the retailer will be able to order as many or as little of each cover as they want," McFarlane Marking Director *Beau Smith* said. "This way, the consumer will also be able to tell the retailer which covers they want. I wanted to make this very retail/consumer friendly. Too many variant covers have been forced down the necks of retailers, and I was real tired of that."

SECURITY CONSCIOUS

What do we know? Well, we know that Marvel is working on a major event entitled ***Maximum Security.*** We know that *Tom Brevoort* will be editing it. We know that *Kurt Busiek* is involved. And we know that "it's a line-wide thing, though it won't carry through literally *every* book we publish," according to Brevoort.

So what *don't* we know? Well, we don't know the storyline, for one thing. Brevoort says that "we've been planting the seeds and setting the foundation for this storyline all over the place in the last year or so, in books you wouldn't necessarily expect as well as in the obvious places." However, he's not ready to spill da beenz on which books, which clues, or the direction of the story event. Of course, as more information becomes available, *CSNsider* will keep you clued in.

LOST ARTIST FINDHOME AT DC

Olivier Coipel, the artist of Legion Lost, has signed on for an exclusive one-year engagement as an artist at DC. Fans who have sampled the Legion revitalization have raved about Coipel's rugged, powerful style.

"I noticed Olivier's pencils when his samples were brought back from the 1998 San Diego convention," ***Legion Lost*** editor *Mike McAvennie* said. "They blew me away, and I thought he would be perfect on *Dan Abnett* and *Andy Lanning*'s four-part 'Legion of the Damned' storyline. DC really wanted to shake the Legion up, and I thought between Dan and Andy's story and Olivier's art, we could do just that.

"The Legion universe has been a very comfortable one for quite awhile now, and I think what Olivier, Dan and Andy have done is given both new and longtime fans something that really makes them pay attention; the characters and concept are intact, but we've been changing the rules from within. New fans are taking notice of it because Olivier's art is so accomplished, and they're finding that the story holds up well with what's been drawn. It's been a team effort in changing the Legion's image while remaining true to its core."

PHIL IN AT DC

Phil Jimenez has signed an exclusive contract with DC, where he'll be involved in such projects as Wonder Woman, where he'll be both artist and co-writer of the series.

"I consider myself primarily an artist but what appeals to me about writing as well as drawing is I have such a real emotional attachment to several characters, and a group of stories that I want to tell about them," Jimenez said. "The joy of writing in addition to illustrating them is I have the opportunity to help the characters evolve to the next level, allow them to grow and change."

Jimenez will continue to supply the cover art for ***The Titans*** as well. "They're the reasons I'm in comics; the Titans were the characters that brought me into comics, Troia especially," Jimenez said. "She was one of the first characters I really latched onto. The fact that she was also Wonder Woman's sidekick; you see the natural progression here. I moved to New York ten years ago to write and draw Wonder Woman, so this is a dream come true for me. Between doing things with the ***Titans*** and working on ***Wonder Woman,*** I get to write and draw my two favorite characters in comics!"

According to Jimenez, his first ***Wonder Woman*** story arc, co-written by *J.M. DeMatteis*, will be "a Batman family-Wonder Woman family crossover dealing with an alliance between the Children of Ares and some classic Batman villains who plan to take over Gotham in the name of Ares. The fun part of this was playing the family members off of one another and see how they're similar and different. You get to play the smartest minds and the strongest characters in the DCU off of each other and see what happens."

"Phil's excitement and passion are contagious," ***Wonder Woman*** editor *Maureen McTigue* added. "And with *Adam Hughes* staying on as cover artist, every

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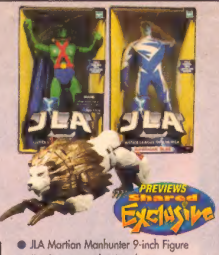

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month readers get two artists who are very passionate about Wonder Woman and get to see that in their work."

ALCALA PASSES AWAY

Alfredo Alcala, the esteemed fine-line Philippine artist who is remembered by legions of fans for his work on ***Conan, Batman, All-Star Squadron, Swamp Thing,*** and a variety of horror and suspense books, died on April 9th at the age of 74. Alcala was one of the most successful and influential of the Philippine artists who broke into the American comics field in the 1970s.

WHICH CARDS? NO, WITCH CARDS!

Dynamic Forces is best known to fans for their line of variant cover editions, autographed books, and lithographs—but this fall, they'll be adding trading cards to their growing line of comics-related products. Dynamic Forces has signed an agreement with Top Cow to produce a ***Witchblade Trading Card Series,*** featuring art by Michael Turner, Keu Cha, Tony *Daniels, Marc Silvestri, Kevin Conrad, Randy Green, David Finch, Adam Pollina, Jae Lee, Joe Jusko, John Paul Leon, Bill Reinhold, Dorian Cleavenger, Mark Texeira, Jimmy Palmiotti,* and many others.

"We haven't done a trading card set in a few years, so we're really looking forward to doing the ***Witchblade*** set with Dynamic Forces," Top Cow President *Matt Hawkins* said. "There's a lot of excitement around ***Witchblade*** with the new creative team and the TV movie, so this is the perfect time to create a new card series."

The card series, which will cover Witchblade's five-year history, is slated for October release. "The timing of this trading card set is perfect," Dynamic Forces president Nick Barrucci said. "Not only is October Witchblade month, and the first Witchblade month of the new millennium, but also October is the month that TNT is releasing the Witchblade made-for-TV movie. This is a great opportunity for comic book fans to enjoy the Witchblade series in the trading card medium and for retailers to promote and sell Witchblade product at a peak time for this comic book series!"

The series will consist of 72 cards plus six omni-chrome chase cards, as well as sketch cards, randomly inserted autographed cards, and more bonuses.

FRANKLY SPEAKING

Over at Comic Book Resources, *Frank Miller* has offered some tantalizing glimpses in to the direction of the sequel to ***Dark Knight Returns*** that ***CSNsider*** told you about last week. In an conversation with *Charles Brownstein*, Miller lifted a bit of the veil of secrecy surrounding the project.

"When this story begins, three years have passed and he will look younger than he did in the first series," Miller said. "He will be strangely happy and at peace. He will be a much more powerful figure and he will be tested. Every hero has to be tested, that's how they're defined.

"It all comes down to 'what is a hero?' For all the flash and glamour of superheroes and their funky costumes and their powers, they hardly have to be heroic. I'm really sick of the hero being the guy who wins and gets the medal at the end. It always makes me a little ill because it gets to the heart of the corrupt premise 'Crime does not pay.' That's not the reason not to commit crimes. Of course they pay! 'Crime is wrong,' should be the message."

So what brought Miller back to the Dark Knight? A year ago, when ***CSNsider*** asked him about rumors that he might be doing another Dark Knight project, he refused to rule out the possibility—but the project wasn't actually in the works at that time. "Fifteen years passed. I came up with some ideas and got the itch to play with DC's toys," Miller said. "I wanted to play with the big old superhero characters. I've been away long enough that I'm not weary of them anymore. And seeing where things have gone in the past few years, I think some refurbishing and housecleaning is in order. Think of me as the weathered sheriff coming back into Dodge 'cause the youngsters are shooting up the church and scaring the horses and not doing right by the women."

Miller may still have a lot of love for Batman, but he isn't a fan of the current superhero genre. "Things have gotten so dreary. The heroes have gotten so ugly that even their muscles have muscles. The elegance of Gil Kane is gone. You don't see the sheer joy of Green Lantern's power ring. The magic of somebody like the Flash-somebody who's able to move so fast that you can't see him move-is gone. There's no sense of the basic wish that any of these characters have. I think anyone who's working on a superhero comic should be obliged to write down in one sentence what the central wish is of the character. Every story has to play to that theme.

"Now we have ugly people fighting uglier people and the guy with the most guns wins. The fundamental of a superhero is the guy in tights saving innocent people from bad things. It's amazing how infrequently that seems to happen in superhero comics these days.

Miller doesn't want to tar every superhero book with the same brush. "Allow me a disclaimer: I'm talking about the *overall direction* I see superhero comics going, not damning each and every title out there. I'm sure there's some good stuff going on that I just haven't seen. But the trend is depressing, and dumb."

Not only will the Dark Knight and Superman return, but *Steve Ditko's* moralistic hero The Question will also play a part in the series. For more information, you can find the full interview at www.comicbookresources.com/features/miller/

ALL THE GOREY DETAILS

Edward Gorey, the acclaimed cartoonist whose work spanned a half-century period, died in mid-April—ironically, just months before the publication of a book that offers an insight into the creator and his career. ***The World of Edward Gorey,*** coming in August from Fantagraphics, is a 96-page look at Gorey and his work as seen through the eyes of novelist Alexander Theroux, a friend and neighbor of Gorey's for over a quarter-century.

According to Fantagraphics' *Eric Reynolds*, "Theroux's monograph combines an insightful artistic analysis, a personal reminiscence, an intimate familiarity with his oeuvre, and an authoritative overview of Gorey's career, written in the author's justly celebrated, delightfully playful and precise prose style. Drawing on exclusive interviews conducted by Theroux over the last 25 years, Theroux explores Gorey's artistic impulses, his vast and eclectic interest in popular culture, his acerbic and eccentric opinions on film, literature, and politics, examining every nook and cranny of Gorey's astoundingly dignified career...

"Although in the works for the last two years, ***The World of Edward Gorey will*** include selected revisions to reflect the artist,s recent passing at the age of 75, and will be illustrated with numerous examples from

Buffy TV Series Brings Original Graphic Novel to Dark Horse

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Gorey,s work, including not only his own books but also books illustrated for authors such as *Raymond Chandler, Lewis Carroll,* and *Samuel Beckett."*

HIT THE ROAD WITH WINICK, CHILL OUT WITH RUCKA

In August, Oni Press has two great trade paperback offerings—one a hard-edged crime drama set in the Antarctic, the other a rite-of-passage road trip tale by the mastermind responsible for Barry Ween.

Whiteout: Melt, the second Carrie Stetko miniseries by *Greg Rucka* and *Steve Lieber*, involves Stekto with rogue Russian agents and stolen nuclear weapons. "I approached this book the way any sequel should be approached," said Rucka. "I wanted it to be a story that alternately stands on its own but also pushes the character forward. I was concerned with taking a fresh angle, and with making Carrie grow as a person. Overall, I am pretty happy with how the series turned out, and I think most of the fans were, as well."

Road Trip collects the Eisner-nominated story arc by *Judd Winick*. Originally seen in the pages of ***Oni Double Feature***, ***Road Trip*** is the story of Jason and Jeanine, who have just lost their older brother in a car crash. They need to drive across the country to identify his body, and along the way, they deal with their grief and relive the memories of better times.

"With added exposure to Winick's career from his work on ***Barry Ween*** and ***Green Lantern***, we have been receiving a lot of requests to make this story more readily available," Oni publisher *Joe Nozemack* said. "In September, Judd will be releasing his graphic novel, ***Pedro & Me***, through Henry Holt & Co. and embarking on a lecture tour of the US. With this important piece of work, Judd's profile will become even higher, and we felt that this was the perfect time to put ***Road Trip*** out as one comic book."

"Readers who may only see me as the guy who writes a lot of toilet jokes with kids cursing may be surprised to see the other side of me that is represented in both ***Road Trip*** and ***Pedro,***" Winick said. "I am very excited that both of my more serious and emotional stories will be going into print at roughly the same time. I feel that I am amassing a nice, varied body of work and hope fans of all my different styles will give each new project a chance."

Look for both books in mid-August.

UPCOMING COMICS—MARVEL IN JULY

Avataars: Covenant of the Shield, a new miniseries by *Len Kaminski, Oscar Jimenez,* and *Eduardo Alpuente*, offers a strange, fantastic take on the Marvel Universe, reinterpreting the familiar superheroic world as a Tolkienesque fantasy saga. Set on Eurth, the book tells the story of Captain Avalon and his comrades-in-arms Blackthorn, Greenskin Smashtroll, Warmaker, Nightowl, Ironheart, Scorch, Duke Ctranj, and others as they confront the villainous Dreadlord. Half the fun is seeing how these Marvel heroes translate into refugees from a D&D campaign!

Avengers: Infinity #1, the kickoff of a four-parter by *Roger Stern, Sean Chen,* and *Scott Hanna*, picks up where ***Avengers Forever*** left off. Busiek and Stern hinted at the existence of the star-spanning Infinites way back then... and now they're here, ready to face off against Thor, Tigra, Moondragon, Photon, and Quasar. But first these Avengers must overcome the Servitors... (And for those of you who want to relive some of the Avengers' most cosmic past exploits, there's ***Avengers: The Kree/Skrull War***, reprinting the *Roy Thomas/Neal Adams* saga from ***Avengers #s 89-97.***

Learn about Reed Richards' fantastic pre-FF years in ***Before the Fantastic Four: Reed Richards #1,*** written by *Peter David* and illustrated by *Duncan Fegredo*. Reed Richards, globe-spanning Indiana-Jonesish adventurer? You got it... but he won't be too successful at it if a recently-scarred Victor Von Doom has his way.

Writer *Dan Jurgens* is joined by penciller *Dan Jurgens* for ***Captain America #33***. That's right—Jurgens is taking on both story and art honors for the star-spangled Avenger's saga beginning with this issue... and he's kicking things off with a story that involves A.I.M., S.H.I.E.L.D., the Falcon, US Agent, Protocide, and Nick Fury.

Daredevil #16 kicks off the long-awaited *Brian Michael Bendis-David Mack* Daredevil story arc that offers new insights into the secret background of Wilson Fisk, aka the Kingpin... and how Daredevil fits into it all.

Hellcat, the heroine who returned from the dead in the pages of ***Thunderbolts 2000*** and ***Avengers 2000***, graduates to her own miniseries, courtesy of *Steve Englehart* and *Norm Breyfogle*. Patsy Walker would love to lead a quiet life, but it doesn't look very likely—not as long as she's the prize in a hellish contest that threatens our world.

David Michelinie and *Bob Layton*, the team responsible for some of the most memorable Iron Man stories of years past, reunite for ***Iron Man: Bad Blood***, a four-parter that presents the final showdown between Iron Man and Justin Hammer. This is an all-new series set in modern continuity, and that means twice as much Iron Man each month!

Never heard of ***The Sentry***? That's okay—neither has any other Marvel fan. But everyone will discover just who the Sentry is in July, when *Paul Jenkins* and *Jae Lee*—creators of ***The Inhumans*** miniseries—reunite to tell the story of the hero that *Stan Lee* created just a week before he came up with the ***Fantastic Four***. *Stan Lee* and *Artie Rosen* created this story of a god among human heroes... but you've never seen it until now!

Dan Jurgens, Erik Larsen, and *Klaus Janson* pit Thor against one of his most dangerous adversaries, the Absorbing Man, in ***Thor #27***. And believe us—when you get Dan Jurgens and Erik Larsen together, you're talking *cosmic* adventure!

Uncanny X-Men #382, a *Chris Claremont-Adam Kubert-Tim Townsend* production introduces a major new enemy for the X-Men: the conqueror known as Killion. And the storyline paves the way for the first official meeting between the two major X-teams in ***X-Men #104*** later this summer.

The Earth X storyline continues in ***Universe X: 0,*** produced by *Alex Ross, Jim Krueger, Doug Braithwaite,* and *Bill Reinhold*. The book begins with the meeting of three old friends—the Angel, Nighthawk, and Gargoyle—and a nightmarish vision of a future twisted into warfare by the rebirth of Captain Marvel. Readers will also get glimpses into the future of Captain America, X-51, Cyclops, the Black Panther, Thor, Banner and the Hulk, the Ani-Men, Magneto, Iceman, the Defenders, Daredevil, Moon Knight, the Inhumans, Silver Surfer, the Sentinels and the X-Men.

THE DORK KNIGHTS RETURN

John Kovalic, creator of ***Dork Tower*** (one of the most acclaimed strips that ever ran here in the pages of ***CSN***), has announced that he will begin self-publishing his book under the Dork Storm Press imprint beginning in August—but that's not the only book that'll be moving to DSP. *Aaron Williams*, creator of the clever fantasy title ***Nodwick*** (recently reviewed in ***CSN***), is also moving to Dork Storm Press beginning with its fourth issue in August. Current plans call for the two bi-monthly books to alternate, meaning that there'll be a Dork Storm Press title every month.

"It was a great idea to bring our abilities and talents together," said Williams. "It's truly a synergistic relationship. John has been more than generous with helping me to get ***Nodwick*** off the ground, and I hope I can use my knowledge to boost Dork Storm's arsenal of assets. Now, if you'll excuse me, I have to go wash my mouth with soap for using the word 'synergistic.'"

"This is huge news for both of us," said Kovalic. "With Dork Storm now releasing one comic book a month, readers and retailers alike will be able to follow the publication schedules far more easily. And there should be a lot of crossover readers for the comic books, as well. Aaron and my senses of humor are frighteningly compatible. Now, if you'll excuse me, I also have to go wash Aaron's mouth with soap for using the word 'synergistic.'

"We'll be doing our best to promote each other's characters in our books by way of in-house ads and announcements," Kovalic added. "There'll even be a ***Dork Tower/Nodwick*** crossover special for 2001."

GAMING NEWS

It's a Game, Not a Coaster

Fans of miniature gaming are a little confused when they first see ***Diskwars*** from Fantasy Flight Publications. This game uses a fairly standard miniature combat rules system, but it doesn't use something normal to most miniature game: miniatures. The game uses a variety of cardboard disks with stats and abilities that determine the power of the disk, which replaces the miniature in the miniature combat system. Now, that wasn't too confusing, was it? Anyway, the important thing is that ***Diskwars*** has a new expansion coming out this spring, and that is great news for fans of the game.

Diskwars: Wastelands is the new expansion that expands not only the disks available in your game, but also the storyline behind the game. It seems that the forces of darkness are currently winning, overrunning the realms of the free races. Llovar has overrun the Thelgrim Peninsula, with only the city of Nanalli still standing. The Elf King Triamlavar and the Wizard Timorran have embarked on a desperate gamble in a hope to turn the tides. They are going to attack the wastelands in the hope of destroying Llovar himself. Of course, the forces of evil rarely stay stagnant, and there is a new malignant force growing in the wastelands that might be more than the forces of good can handle. In game terms, this means that you are going to get some new great characters to add to your army, and some massive monsters to make things very interesting. Each of the ***Diskwars: Wastelands*** booster packs will contain between ten and twenty disks in one of four different packages. You can look for the newest disks to hit the shelves in May for the suggested retail price of $4.95 a pack.

Fans of the ***Star Trek*** universe will have their day in the sun—or at least near one—this spring with the release of the ***Red Alert*** game, using the ***Diskwars*** system. The game is a joint venture between Fantasy Flight and Last Unicorn Games. ***Red Alert*** will allow for ship-to-ship battles with key crew members that can make the difference between victory and humiliating defeat. The game will allow you to play one of five different factions initially, letting you choose between Klingon, Romulan, Cardassian, Ferengi, and, of course, the Federation. Scenarios for the game can range from simple ship-to-ship combat, to more elaborate games that also involve boarding actions and planetary defense. You can begin the game a pre-set Starter Pack that contains a ship flat, counter flats, scenarios, rules, and a ship control panel. You can add to your fleet with a Booster Pack that contains four randomly sorted flats. The boosters will contain rare flats that you can't get in the starters. The Starter Flats for ***Red Alert*** will carry a suggested retail price of $12.00, while the Booster Flats will retail at $6.00. You can look for ***Red Alert*** to hit shelves soon.

Wrestling Lawsuits Aren't Fake

A recent lawsuit was filed against the **World Wrestling Federation**, better known as the **WWF**, by game designer *Michael Fitzgerald* and Wizards of the Coast. The lawsuit claims that the **WWF** game, which is slated for release from Comic Images, has wrongfully taken the designs of Fitzgerald and his ***WCW Nitro*** trading card game. The **WWF** game was scheduled for release this spring, while the **WCW** game was due in June. Fitzgerald had originally offered his designs to **WWF**, but withdrew them when he came to terms with **WCW** and Wizards of the Coast.

Wizards of the Coast brand manager Luke Peterschmidt said, "We could tell immediately that this was a strong game design, and we,re looking forward to the release of our **WCW** game in June. By partnering in this lawsuit with Fitzgerald, we,re showing our designers that we respect their work and will fight to defend their rights." Keep checking with ***CSN*** for the latest news and information regarding this developing situation.

From One Bug To Another

If playing games on a large scale really bugs you, then you might want to check out the new ***Insectia Second Edition*** game system. ***Insectia*** is a game where little bugs rule the world, and you get to try to be the big bug on the pile. The game system has you designing a mutated insect that grows and metamorphoses as it eats its prey. In this game, you get a bug's eye view of the world, looking at the hive and the world that surrounds it. Players use unique bug cards to design their mutants—heads, appendages, and abdomen—and they they have to fight their way out of the underground Hive. Seventy Hive bugs are included in the game, from preying mantises to centipedes. As you fight and devour your enemies, you get bigger and stronger—and uglier. Special rules included in this game cover things like projector weapons, web bolas, expandable spines, pheromones, venom, and armor. This is not a collectible card game, but a card game that comes with everything you need to play in one package. So, if you think that you've got what it takes to be the best bug in the world, then you

GAMING NEWS

might want to check out ***Insectia Second Edition***. You can look for Insectia to creep into stores this May for the suggested retail price of $19.95.

Hot, Sandy Role-Playing

One of the most celebrated science-fiction novels of all-time is becoming a role-playing game for the first time ever. ***Frank Herbert's Dune: Chronicles of the Imperium*** is the new game from Last Unicorn Games, joining their already successful ***Star Trek*** game systems to create one of the most complete science-fiction gaming universes in role-playing history. The hardcover core rulebook will include all of the rules that you need to begin playing. You and your friends can assume the roles of House mentats, swordmasters, nobles, and Bene Gesserit sisters in service to one of the great powers of the Imperium. While the books center on the desert planet, you can choose to explore any area of the Imperium, letting you visit Wallach IX for an Imperial fete, or, naturally, stride across the scorching sands of the planet Arrakis.

The game is designed by authors O. Seyler, S. Long, M. Colville, and C. Moore, all under the watchful eye of Brian Herbert, the son of Dune's creator, and co-author along with Kevin Anderson of the new series of books set to appear later in the year. The ***Dune*** role-playing game uses a variation on the same system that was developed for the the ***Star Trek RPG*** series, and, while not designed to be totally compatible, will let you compare the stats and abilities of some of your favorite characters from two vastly different universes. The 288-page rulebook will let you smuggle the spice, melange, to the rich and powerful, or lead your house's forces in a razzia against the Harkonnen oppressors, what you do and the direction of your campaign is entirely up to you.

Dune: Chronicles of the Imperium will be out this May for the suggested retail price of $35.00.

The Final Four

Wizards of the Coast has just released their schedule for the final four months of the year, and there are some great things headed your way.

In September, ***Dungeons and Dragons*** takes the spotlight. ***The Dungeon Master's Guide*** continues the new third edition release, with essential material for running your campaign. If that isn't enough, you can also pick up the new and revised ***Dungeon Master's Screen*** that same month, with the most useful tables and charts in an easily accessible format.

The first adventure module for the ***Dungeons and Dragons 3rd Edition*** system will be ***The Sunless Citadel*** by author *Bruce Cordell*. This is the first of eight modules that will highlight the rules of the new third edition of the game.

The D&D Gazetteer provides an overview of Oerth, the general setting for the *D&D3* game this September. The most important cities, along with the personalities that inhabit the lands.

There are four great novels due out in September. ***The Nether Scroll*** by *Lynn Abbey* continues ***The Lost Empire*** series of the Forgotten Realms imprint. ***Children of the Plains*** is the latest of the ***Dragonlance*** novels, beginning ***The Barbarians*** series by *Paul B. Thompson y Tonya C. Cook*. ***Gridrunner*** is the latest novel for the ***Star*Drive*** series, as a stand-alone novel by *Thomas Reid*. The second novel in the ***Legend of the Five Rings*** series will be ***The Unicorn*** by *Allison Lasieur*.

In October, ***Star Wars*** steals the spotlight, as the ***Star Wars Episode One Adventure Game*** debuts. The game is set prior to the events of ***Star Wars Episode One: The Phantom Menace***, letting you create new adventures in the city of Theed.

The Monster Manual for the *D&D3* game will reach shops in October, with over two hundred monsters to add spice to your game. Not only will this volume have updates to older monsters, but it will also have creatures new to the third edition rules. ***Into the Dragon's Lair*** is the first ***Forgotten Realms*** module for the Third Edition rules, with the crown of Cormyr at stake.

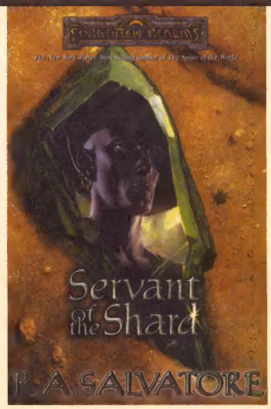
A host of nasties heads your way in October with the release of ***Xenoforms*** for the ***Dark Matter*** campaign setting. More than forty monsters, aliens, and super-natural creatures are detailed for your game.

Servant of the Shroud is the latest release from R.A. Salvatore, continuing his interconnected series of novels. This one revolves around the dark elf Jarlaxle and his quest for the Crystal Shard, only to discover that is might be too powerful for him to contain.

Magic: The Gathering—Invasion begins the new series of releases for the ***Magic*** card game, as the forces of evil invade Dominaria for what may turn out to be their final battle. ***Invasion*** is the new stand-alone expansion that will contain over two-hundred new cards with new rules and concepts to explore.

There are two additional new novels coming out in October. ***Bertrem's Guide to the Age of Mortals: Everyday Life in Krynn of the Fifth Age*** is a sourcebook for the world, setting the stage for the forthcoming ***War of Souls*** storyline. ***Magic: The Gathering—Invasion*** is the first book of the ***Invasion Cycle*** series, tying in with the new ***Magic*** release.

The ***Star Wars Roleplaying Game*** core rulebook highlights the month of November, letting you explore concepts from any era of the ***Star Wars*** saga using a modified version of the *D&D3* game system. The ***Star Wars Character Record Sheets*** will give you the perfect place to record your characters, with all of the details ready to be filled in by you.



In conjunction with the new feature film, ***Dungeons & Dragons*** is making a big splash. ***Dungeons & Dragons: The Movie*** will be released as an adventure module that will let you recreate the action from the big-budget movie, or create new adventures of your own using the settings and characters introduced in the film. The movie will also hit the book racks with the ***Dungeons & Dragons: The Movie*** adaptation and ***The Making of Dungeons & Dragons: The Movie*** giving you the inside information from behind the scenes.

The Forge and the Fury is the second in the Adventures Path adventure series, exploring more of the new rules and concepts of the ***Dungeons & Dragons 3rd Edition*** game.

Tying in with the new computer game, ***Pool of Radiance: Attack on Myth Drannor*** provides game stats on all of the characters and monsters that are introduced in the computer game, as well as allowing you to explore this role-playing concept in a traditional manner. The computer game will also have a novelization due out at the same time.

There are three other novels due out that same month. ***Shadow Witness*** is the new novel by Paul Kemp in the ***Sembia Series***. ***Draconian Measures*** is the sequel to ***The Doom Brigade*** by Don Perrin and Margaret Weis. ***The Crane*** is the third novel in ***The Clan War*** series for ***Legend of the Five Rings*** by Ree Soesbee.

The Hero Builder's Guidebook is 96-pages of information that helps you to truly make your character unique. Lots of new skill packages and more will make this a must have for players of the new ***Dungeons & Dragons 3rd Edition***.

At long last, the ***Diablerie: Diablo II*** expansion will let you play the world of the highly anticipated computer game in the world of ***D&D***.

The world of Greyhawk comes to life in the pages of the ***Living Greyhawk Gazetteer***, giving you insights into the RPGA world.

The Secrets of Naboo reveals never before seen information about the planet, from the Queen's Palace to the Gungan city for the ***Star Wars Role-Playing Game System***.

Four novels round out the month of December. ***The City of Ravens*** by Richard Baker continues ***The Cities*** series for the ***Forgotten Realms*** setting. ***The Thieves Guild*** by Jeff Crook is the latest in ***Dragonlance's Crossroads*** series. From a time gone by, the final novel in the ***Ice Age*** saga for the ***Magic: The Gathering*** game comes courtesy of Jeff Grubb. Finally, ***If Whispers Call*** by Don Bassingthwaite is the second novel for the ***Dark Matter*** game setting.

As you can see, there are plenty of exciting products scheduled for the last four months of the year. For more details, just keep looking to the pages of ***CSN***.

A Far Cry for Battle

If you've played ***Axis and Allies***, then you have an idea of the potential for the new Avalon Hill tabletop strategy games. The new game is a a far cry from the world of ***Axis and Allies***, but it has much the same potential. ***BattleCry*** is the new that allows you to accurately recreate up to fifteen battles from the American Civil War. The game is designed for two to four players, and uses a total of one hundred and sixteen highly detailed playing pieces, including infantry, cavalry and artillery units based on the size of the armies that participated. You can change the course of history, or recreate some of the famous battles on American soil in this easy to learn, fun game. The large scale battle-board allows for maneuvering and strategies that can preserve the union, or lead a new course for America. ***BattleCry*** is due out in late spring for the suggested retail price of $49.95.

The Nobilis of Intentions

Hogshead Publishing has recently acquired the rights to the ***Nobilis*** role-playing game, previously published by Pharos Press. Hogshead is working closely with Pharos to produce an updated edition of the game that holds true to the original. ***Nobilis*** is a game that centers around a clandestine war between immensely powerful metabeings fighting to control the destiny of creation and reality. Hogshead plans to have the revised edition under their imprint out in time for GenCon.

While you pay little or nothing for your copy of *Comic Shop News*, it isn't free. Your retailer pays for the copies he distributes each week. He does this because he wants you to know about all the great new comics coming out, and nobody does this better than *CSN*. Remember, everything mentioned in *CSN* is available through this shop, so if you are interested in an item you read about in *CSN* but don't see, ask! Your retailer will be glad to help you order it.